

# U.S. Concerns Said to Approach Hanoi About Offshore Oil Rights

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PARIS, Dec. 30—American oil companies reportedly have made informal contact with Hanoi to determine under what type of arrangements they might resume exploring for oil in the South China Sea off the coast of South Vietnam.

Oil industry informants said that the Exxon Oil Company and a consortium of American independents were among the enterprises that had been in touch with Vietnamese representatives.

The soundings were said to have been taken at meetings arranged with the knowledge of the United States Treasury and State Departments in such places as Paris and Hong Kong. There were unconfirmed reports that representatives of American companies had traveled to Vietnam.

Such travel would have to be cleared by the State Department under an embargo on business with the Vietnamese and travel to Vietnam that was imposed by the United States during the build-up of hostilities with North Vietnam in the 1960's and was extended to cover South Vietnam last May after the fall of the Saigon regime.

Identical bills have been introduced in The House of Representatives and The Senate seeking to end the embargo, by Representative Jonathan B.ingham, Democrat-Liberal of

the Bronx, and by Senator Mark O. Hatfield, Republican of Oregon and Senator Adlai E. Stevenson III, Democrat of Illinois.

But passage remains uncertain because of opposition from certain groups, including families of men missing in action in the Vietnam war.

The Hanoi radio has repeatedly stated in recent months that the Vietnamese authorities would welcome American and other companies back to explore for oil, but it has asserted that new terms must be negotiated.

Before American companies can return, the embargo must be lifted. The companies are described by specialists as increasingly interested in its repeal. Last month the American Chamber of Commerce in Asia, in Hong Kong, representing 230 American businesses including major oil companies, issued a policy statement calling for an end of the embargo.

In 1973 and 1974 the Saigon regime granted about a dozen offshore exploration permits, mainly to American companies, but also to European and Japanese. French and Japanese companies are currently described as actively negotiating.

Among the major international companies that had bought concessions were Exxon, Mobil and Royal Dutch Shell. All drilling platforms and other equipment were pulled out last spring.